

mean? The understanding of the process is equally as important as understanding the product.

The Activity

Groups of students (6 to 12 at most) working with a facilitator (teacher) first do non-verbal theater games. Activities which explore feelings, emotions, and impressions, are best, i.e., children are asked to show with facial expressions their concept of "happy," "sad," "hungry," "sleepy," "angry," etc. These are taped and played back. Usually kids will exaggerate those concepts (a big frown for "sad" or a licking of the lips for "hungry.") During play back emphasize the idea of exaggeration. Have everyone use their entire bodies to show how they feel. Have the kids move around portraying those different feelings. The same process can be done for animals, plants or machines. What is it like to be a fish, or a rose, or a TV.

These activities are taped. When played back, suggest to the group that sounds be added to the movements. This can be done in a variety of ways. While doing "emotions," selections of classical music of different styles can be played. For the concept of happy, for example, play various examples of concert music and ask the group which they feel "happiest" about. (You can also extend that to talking about why they think the composer wrote the music the way he did.) Students can create their own "happy sounds" using percussion instruments of just their voices. The sounds can be "orchestrated" by the group to go with various movements or emotions. A final tape is then created integrating the movements with the sounds either recorded or generated. When played back all sorts

of questions can be discussed: Does this really represent the idea we were trying to express?; How do we recognize how people feel without the use of words?; What other languages besides speech do we use to communicate?; What elements in music give us clues to the composer's intentions?; How does body movement indicate the way you feel inside?; What does it mean "to dance?"; What does it mean "to make music?"; When is music or dance "popular" or "classical?"

Variations and Follow-Up

Concentrate (especially with older kids) on integrating the process with other activities. A highly integrative activity might be to use a piece such as the 1812 Overture and explore the full implications of that work. Creating movements to go with the music, creating stories to act out to the music, investigating what the music was intended to express, researching the original event that sparked the writing of the piece, etc. The portapak role here is to serve as a mechanism for feedback and reflection.

Teaching Suggestions

The activity can be used best in the elementary school particularly with kids in the middle age group (6 to 10 years old.) Size and continuity are important. You need a small enough group so that students will feel comfortable yet large enough to enable interaction. And most important, develop activities which you are comfortable in carrying out. Never begin a project in which you have feelings of doubt or anxiety.

6:00 News

BRUCE COST

This activity is especially suited to courses in which mass media are studied. It gives students a conception of how TV and newspapers handle the same information. By doing this kids will begin to get an idea of the inherent capabilities of each medium. They will also discover how news changes when it is adapted for presentation in video and print. Finally, this exercise gives a small group, with little expertise, the chance to put together a production



Bruce Cost

in a few days.

The Activity

Hold a brief class discussion in which students list all possible areas covered by TV news (local news, sports, analysis, interviews, weather, etc.) Divide the class into groups of five or six. Each group should designate a director and an anchorman. Other roles are designated according to what the

group has chosen to report about. With a newspaper as its primary resource, each group organizes, rehearses, and tapes a show complete with commercials, if desired. News shows may be as simple or as elaborate as the group chooses. All groups should work during planning and production in isolation from the others. When all the tapes have been completed, the class as a whole screens and compares the results.

The final production from each news team will be unique in spite of their abstracting news from the same resource dealing with the same events. As you can imagine, this exercise raises many points for discussion: What is news?; What is important news?; What is the relationship between the news and what really happened?; How do the people reporting the news effect the message?; How does TV effect the message?, etc.

Neighborhood Documentary

LARRY GOLDIN

There is a preference among many doing video with kids for "real-time" or "non-edited" tapes. The goal is to preserve the recorded incident just as it happened rather than producing tapes that are "filmic" in the sense that different shots are edited together in an order other than they were shot. This "video verite" school finds "filmic" a very pejorative term. Those involved in this kind of video state they are "process" and not "product" oriented. For them, editing is synonymous with distortion.

But editing is a process too. It brings to kids whole new order of perceptions, decisions and skills. We all edit our perceptions every day. We decide whose opinions to expose ourselves to and whose to avoid. For all their claims to the opposite, those doing video verite follow a similar selective process: they decide on what event to tape, how to tape it, who will be in it.

This activity is about the unavoidable subjectivity of selecting and editing processes. It involves making a historical documentary about the neighborhood in which your students live. This kind of video production is worth doing because kids often don't realize how their community has changed in respect to both the physical and social environment.

Further, kids who are members of various racial and ethnic minorities can learn about the cultural heritage which they no longer perceive in their day-to-day lives. Through interviewing old people, kids can come to see the past in real rather than mythic terms.



Mary Sheridan

The Activity

The documentary process starts with the kids deciding what they want to explore. They must find people who can give them first hand knowledge of the time or place of interest. Next, students should decide the questions that will get the information they need. Prepare kids to drop their planned questions and make up new ones when something or interest comes up which was not anticipated. The teacher should ask the person being interviewed if the crew can return at a later time since the kids often generate new questions after they have played back the tapes.

If kids have done a good job of questioning, it is not necessary for viewers to hear the questions posed on the final tape. Instead, in the edited tape there can be simple but effective sequences of people telling their own stories. The use of old photographs brings into play various researching skills. And such materials create visual excitement when comparing past to present. It is in the editing process that kids can intercut the shots of stills with the interviews while still maintaining the audio-track of the interviewee's voice. This can be done easily with a standard editing deck by transferring audio and video signals one at a time. Finally, in the editing process kids will need to write and record the necessary introduction plus statements of narration.

When the tape has been edited, a special presentation should be planned for those who were in the tape. Another screening for parents can provide the kids with further insight into the history and changes of their environment.